

Japan

Japan & Missionaries: Where China was more open to Jesuit missionaries, so long as the missionaries were syncretic enough to accommodate Confucian values and learn something about Chinese values, Japan saw relatively few converts in the 1500s. We talked in class about the “closing” of Japan and the banning of Christianity. Despite the so-called closing, lords located on the extreme southern or northern ends tended to be less controlled by shoguns.

End of Shogunate: By the 1800s some of the provinces in the S had emerged as more wealthy and prosperous than others, probably owing to their insulation from central power. There was a movement in the central government to attempt to restore more direct control. They were also on careful lookout for intruders from their W, e.g. Dutch, British, French, and Russians. It is in this context that US Commodore Perry arrives with his fleet in 1853, demanding that Japan open to US ships for refueling and trade when he return in 1854. The Tokugawa shogun, begrudgingly accepted, angering provincial leaders. In the early 1860s these tensions grew, esp. in the SW provinces, where open rebellion to central authorities took place. Other provincial leaders joined the rebellion in 1867, and by 1868 the old state was destroyed and the young emperor “restored”.

Meiji Restoration: The new state was known by the young emperor’s reign name meaning “enlightened rule”. Japan’s new leadership (Meiji oligarchs) set out to create a strong centralized state. This growth and centralization took place b/c neither the US, nor Britain and France took any great interest in making a move on it. The new leadership dissolved the old system of provincial governors and the samurai class. Already way ahead of the game in regional literacy (as much as 35%), the new leaders also developed Japan’s educational system, as well as a conscript army and new systems of communication. They also began sending educational missions abroad. The ruling oligarchy sought technical, commercial, and consumer knowledge from the W—there was the idea that they would adopt only that which was useful.

Rise of Industry: Industrialization took place without too much foreign debt. Nevertheless, peasants were often over-taxed in the process, and many families sent their daughters into indentured servitude to textile mills—the govt then sold these bonds to investors, which allowed the state to pay off its debts. Japan’s many rivers allowed it to develop hydroelectric capacity. Four giant industries—Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Yasuda, and Mitsui controlled most of industry and commerce—remember the address by Iwasaki Yataro from Week 9. About half the population remained poor farmers.

Authoritarian Gov’t & Imperialism: In 1889 Japan promulgated a new constitution, with a bicameral legislature and a cabinet led by Prime Minister. The military (army and navy) remained out of civilian control. Only the rich could vote. As Japan built the military and industrial apparatus to combat encroachment by W powers, it also built an apparatus that would allow it to extend its own will as well. As China was growing weaker, Japan was growing stronger. Japan had little arable land to grow food for its rapidly growing population. It saw Korea, Manchuria, and parts of China as integral to its further development. By 1900 Japan, alongside European powers and the US, helped to put down China’s Boxer Rebellion. It is also at this time that Japan was strong enough to repudiate some of the unequal trading treaties that had been established since its reopening. Japan’s military might was further proved in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. Western powers thought they could control what they viewed as their junior partner.

WWI: The Japanese joined the Allied side in WWI with an eye toward advancing upon Germany's N Pacific colonies and moving further into China. During the war Japan presented China with 21 Demands, making it into a virtual protectorate.

Post WWI-1937: Nationalists in China are growing stronger—want to challenge Japanese. Japanese, in the meanwhile use an incident at the Manchurian railway to “liberate” the province from the Chinese. At grassroots level, Chinese boycott Japanese goods. After 1921—Communist Party in China—small, intellectual—Mao leads in early 20s. US and League of Nations condemn Japanese actions in Manchuria, but Japanese ignore and build RRs and heavy industry to speed up their own military development. In Japan proper—massive building of war ships and gov't grows more authoritarian. By the mid-1930s debates among Japanese leadership deal with how to solve economic problems: conquest of China or war with USSR.

Sino-Japanese War: In 1937 Japan attacked China, seizing Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and other coastal cities—continued to move—see map. Warfare was absolutely brutal 1937/38 raping of women, mass killing of civilians, etc. Nationalist leader Chiang did things like flood out villages to slow the Japanese onslaught, but they also had the effect of causing massive destruction, death, and homelessness. Chiang then fled to central China to build up forces—not to fight the Japanese, but to fight the Communists, who were growing more powerful.

WWII—Asian/Pacific Theatre: When war broke out in Europe in 1939, this opened opportunities for Japan in Southeast Asia, a region rich in oil, rubber, and other strategic resources. After the fall of France, Japan moved into French Indochina (Vietnam). Britain and US stop shipments of steel, iron, oil, etc. crippling the Japanese war machine. Japan's alternatives were: give up conquests and be humiliated; continue, but face economic disaster; chose war. The attack on Pearl Harbor (12/41) was not meant as a first step to conquest of the US, but in forcing the US to accept its role in the Pacific and Southeast Asia—Admiral Yamamoto was trying to pull a move like Hitler in Europe and assumed that the “isolationist” US would not respond. As the Japanese pushed their way through Southeast Asia and the Dutch East Indies, their rhetoric spoke of liberation and their tactics of conquest. By the spring of 1942 the US was bombing Tokyo and blocking Japanese passage to Australia. The major turning point, however, was the Battle of Midway in which Japan lost a number of aircraft carriers and the US made steady gains thereafter.

Cold War: After their defeat the Japanese had to accept foreign military occupation (until 1952) and the creation of a new gov't. Japan received independence in 1951 and signed peace treaties with its former enemies. The new constitution, written during the US occupation, called for limited self-defense, no deployment of troops abroad, and gave women the vote. The Japanese turn toward rebuilding for commerce rather than conquest. Electricity, steel, and shipbuilding all contributed to Japan's reemergence as a formidable player in the world economy. Despite Japan's paucity in mineral resources, it weathered the oil crisis of 1973 much better than Europe or the US. Throughout the 70s and 80s, Japan was a major exporter of goods to the W, prompting the US and the European Community to try to force open the Japanese market—limited success. There were predictions in the 80s that Japan would eclipse the US in economic growth, but issues related to the stock market and housing, as well as issues of corruption in gov't, slowed things down.